

enue of about \$200,250. In addition to this source of revenue from the fishing industry there was issued in 1918 a total of six hundred and ten trap licenses at \$100 each, making \$61,000 more; or a total tax from the industry of \$261,250 for the year. This amount of revenue was derived from a pack with a market value of \$45,552,714, and floating equipment and permanent buildings and traps valued at \$55,000,000; or a total valuation of more than \$100,000,000. Were this product and property located in the State of Washington, say, and for example, in the City of Bellingham, it would have to pay city, county and state taxes, which at the very least would amount to five per cent, or an aggregate revenue of \$5,000,000. This amount, compared with the puny \$261,250 received by Alaska, is the best conceivable presentation of the activities, the purposes, and the value to the public, of the government agency known as the United States Bureau of Fisheries in Alaska.

To forestall any possible misapprehension on this subject of fish trust taxation, it should be said that the United States Government also levies and collects a tax of four cents a case on packed salmon, or a total of \$178,000. This small sum the trust pays without protest, presumably because the amount goes to pay the expenses of the Bureau of Fisheries. The pittance received by Alaska was fought bitterly and vengefully, and not a penny was surrendered until the fish trust had exhausted every legal technicality and quibble and device to the last possible court.

The Alaskan fisheries have produced up to date, as shown by known and published official figures, a product valued at \$390,000,000. All of this vast business and its 29,000 employees are theoretically and by law under the supervision of the Bureau of Fisheries, and yet there are fewer officials on the ground where they could be of value if free and so inclined than would be required in a small and peaceful country village. Of the nearly 30,000 employees brought north each year, practically all are taken back to the States at the end of the fishing season to be paid off in Seattle, Portland, or San Francisco. As all food, equipment, and other supplies are brought north in cannery ships, the operations result in leaving scarcely a dollar in the country from which the fish are taken, aside from that \$261,250 tax revenue from the \$100,000,000 industry.

Alaska has long cried in vain for the legal control of her fisheries with a view to preventing the extermination of the edible species of sea food; also with a view to enforcing more diversified fishing. This would follow naturally a rigorous suppression of wanton fish destruction where unwanted species are caught in traps, nets and otherwise. By requiring fishermen to save all edible fish taken, instead of wantonly throwing away all save the particular species in which they specialize, the price of fish food to consumers would be reduced, and the revenue of fishermen would inevitably be increased through the immensely augmented consumption.

Can Yet Save Fisheries

ALASKA'S fish were once her most valuable asset. Mining country as she is, her greatest mines were in the sea. If the legal control of the industry were turned over to the people of Alaska by the United States Government even yet the Alaskan fisheries could be saved from extermination. The Alaska people understand Alaskan conditions. They cannot be blinded by the specious pretenses of greedy exploiters. They know the only remedy that will prove effective, and they know how to apply it. If the fisheries are to be saved there is no other solution, no other way of doing it, than by committing the work to the people who know how, and whose interests would be furthered by doing it. This, however, is probably hopeless. Disguise the matter in any way, and seemingly any way will blind Congress, it cannot be hidden from the people of Alaska that the fish trust is master. The Bureau of Fisheries obeys the mandates of the master and, unfortunately, the Bureau of Fisheries, not Alaska, has the ear of Congress.

There are, of course, other subdivisions of the Department of Commerce in addition to the Bureau of Fisheries, operating in Alaska. Likewise, the Department of Agriculture functions through many subdivisions, and extends its activities to many varied subjects and objects. But the preponderating administrative activity is in the hands of agencies under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior. In former years this great department was administered in the interests of the people at large. That was before the day of fads and nostrums in government, and administrative quackery. Political jobs were highly valued but relatively scarce. Nobody once placed wished to surrender his job. The rapid increase of population brought new hordes of contenders for political preferment, and thus made the retention of jobs increasingly difficult. There was but one solution: more jobs must be created to fill the insistent demand, and concurrently the public must be educated to believe that the permanent retention of a political job-holder possesses peculiar merit; otherwise, the old American notion of rotation in office would account for many devoted heads. Such was the inception of what is known as the merit system; an ingeniously chosen term for an ingenious, sham so skillfully insinuated into the hearts and minds of the American people that today it is little less than profanation to speak candidly of its sole end and aim. In Alaska at least the Department of the Interior is far and away the chief exponent of the merit



An Alaskan brown bear of average size. It is claimed that animals much larger than this have been shot.

system, if one judge by the number and comparative uselessness of the permanently entrenched political parasites it keeps in Alaska on the Federal pay roll. Before the necessity of inventing fanciful nonsensical employments to provide places for its favorites had submerged the Department of the Interior, it helped most mightily in the development of the western states. Indeed the western portion of the United States is a glorious monument to the wisdom with which this department was administered before it succumbed to the influence of the visionary, the doctrinaire and the charlatan, and, in the view of many Alaskans, to that of the financial brigand masquerading as the champion of a

race of men yet unborn. Alaska is today an equally striking monument to the benumbing and demoralizing touch of this same department since its activities ceased to be guided by law and common sense, and fell under the bane of secretarial "discretion" and visionary theories.

During the past three national administrations, beginning with that of President Roosevelt, the policy of discretion in determining the rights of citizens of Alaska has grown into full bloom. In virtually all particulars it has exactly reversed the administrative policy under which the West was developed into a vast empire of homes and plenty. True, the wild buffalo was driven from his natural habitat on the plains, but in lieu of every buffalo there sprang up one thousand head of domestic stock. The savage with his ready tomahawk gave way, but in his stead appeared the husbandman and his plow. The filth and squalor of a tepee surrounded with fetid piles of noxious offal disappeared, but only to be supplanted by a habitable domicile equipped with soap and bathtub. The savage orgies of barbarism and moral degradation came to an end, but the church, and school, and the incidents of civilization filled the void thus made. On the other hand the reversal of policy in Alaska has driven the would-be homebuilder from his wilderness cabin and turned his acres over to the sole possession of the prowling moose and the murderous brown bear. The sprightly step of the youthful Alaskan pioneer has been stopped in its course; progress has been outlawed; the sources of livelihood have been put under lock and key and left to rot and decay unused and valueless.

The new Secretary of the Interior, Mr. John Barton Payne, has just gone on record as willing to end these intolerable conditions to the extent of his authority. Alaskans have been too severely whipped, their morale is too badly broken, to do more than faintly hope that his good intentions may not be frustrated by powers inimical to Alaska's interests; may not be blasted in their inception by the very agents he must rely upon to execute his beneficent intentions. Mr. Payne is at all events an American, and comes to his work with no page of concepts out of the book of a foreign land, and no brief from as ruthless a corporation as ever coveted or seized unlawfully public domain and public property. In these few facts at least lies ground for hope.

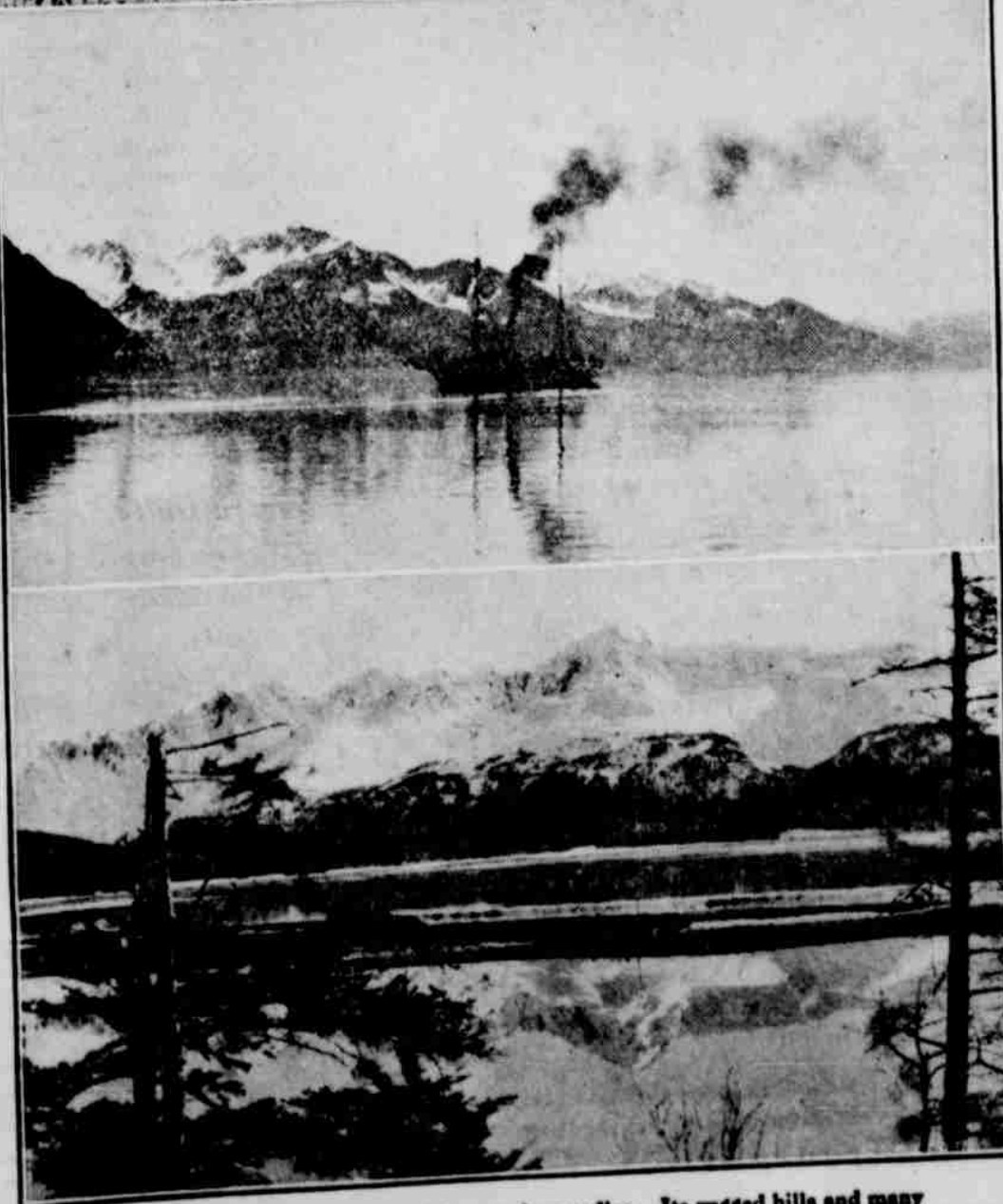
Under the new order, under this new policy of government of American citizens by the discretion of an appointed individual, the Secretary of the Interior becomes virtually an absolute despot in all matters affecting public lands in this Territory; excepting as the Secretary of Agriculture performs like authority in respect of the other great stretches of land sequestered under the misleading name of national forests. His despotic power exists only in theory, to be sure; for in point of fact the particular individual holding the cabinet portfolio, called the Secretaryship of the Interior knows but little of what goes on in his name in Alaska. He personally knows practically nothing of administrative details, and in the very nature of his office could not. With such vast and complicated interests under his jurisdiction it is, of course, impossible that any individual can do more than generally outline policy, and in its execution merely sign his name on the dotted line of the more important documents purporting to embody his purposes. In that circumstance lies the hopelessness of Alaska. Alaskans are convinced, justly or otherwise, that the government departments having most to do with Alaskan matters are honeycombed with agents inimical to Alaskan interests—agents with both the power and disposition to frustrate the most benevolent intentions of their technical chiefs.

Difficult to Acquire Land Titles

THE rules and regulations of the Department of the Interior for fifteen years past have had the effect, if not the original design, of making increasingly difficult the acquisition of title to property by private citizens. Resident agents have applied these rules and regulations with a zealotry, not to say a harshness, unknown in any other department of American public life, with the single possible exception of the revenue service as administered in Alaska. In no other section of the Union, and at no other time in the history of the Republic, has governmental policy been directed to hampering the prosperity of the individual citizen. This policy rests on no basis of socialistic or Bolshevik doctrine. It is simply an arbitrary playing-at-government by men obsessed of a craze to do something of a supposedly progressive nature, but without knowledge of the needs or conditions of the country attempted to be administered. That may be taken as true in the main, as applied to routine administration. The underlying policy of sequestration, withdrawals, reservations, and other evils classed generally as so-called conservation in Alaska is an entirely different matter and above and beyond the control of petty administrative officials.

Years ago observant men began to foresee that Alaska would eventually be depopulated, and the people meanwhile be reduced to virtual pauperism, as a consequence of the new order introduced under Mr. Roosevelt's presidency. The fact that this policy has been deliberately pursued in face of such prospects is one of the strongest arguments advanced by the radical element in proof that it was instituted with that express design.

(To be continued next week)



Alaska is still the hunter and fisherman's paradise. Its rugged hills and many coves abound with game and fish.